Beanstalk reveals ‘Top 40’ children’s books for struggling and reluctant readers

Tuesday 1 May, 2018

Beanstalk – a literacy charity which recruits, trains and places volunteers in primary schools across England to provide one-to-one support to children who have fallen behind with reading – has revealed 40 children’s books that will be used by the charity’s volunteers to kick-start reading engagement for the children they support.

Beanstalk’s ‘Top 40’ has been handpicked by children’s literacy experts including Beanstalk staff, trained reading helpers and literacy consultant Marilyn Brocklehurst – founder of The Norfolk Children’s Book Centre. The selection process involved careful consideration of the types of books Beanstalk-supported children would find fun and motivational. The books will be provided to Beanstalk schools as part of a starter pack resource which will be used by the charity’s trained volunteers placed in that setting.

Beanstalk has been working in schools for over 40 years supporting thousands of children each year across the country who have fallen behind with reading. By bringing together the expertise of its long-standing reading helpers and highly respected literacy experts, Beanstalk has developed a resource which will ensure its network of reading helpers are well equipped from the outset to help more children than ever before.

Ginny Lunn, Chief Executive Officer of Beanstalk, said:

“As part of Beanstalk’s vision to help more children become confident and able readers we need to ensure that our volunteers have immediate access to age-appropriate and expertly chosen books as well as ongoing training and support to use those resources with children in the best possible ways. Up to now we have been so fortunate to have fantastic supplies of book boxes for volunteers to use, however, the introduction of Beanstalk’s starter packs will ensure that new volunteers are well equipped and have some brilliant resources to work on engaging the children from the very beginning – while they are still getting to know them. We also hope that by revealing Beanstalk’s ‘Top 40 ‘, it might help anyone looking for inspiration for a child they know - from parents to grandparents, reading helpers to teaching staff. And of course we will continue to develop and adapt this resource as the needs of our reading helpers and children changes, as well as encouraging volunteers to work with a variety of reading materials, as we always have done, including exploring local libraries and the school’s own library if they have one.”

Marilyn Brocklehurst, founder of the Norfolk Children’s Book Centre, said:

“We were very happy to work closely with Beanstalk to choose books for their starter packs and were so pleased with the final selection as they are all brilliant for children reading at all levels. They are great fun and a lot of the books are very original! We chose a mix of some classic books, such as Dear Zoo and more contemporary books, like Oi Frog! We, at the Norfolk Children’s Book Centre, are very happy to work with Beanstalk, the support that the children receive from Beanstalk reading helpers is exceptional.”

Beanstalk’s ‘Top 40’ has been organised into four age-appropriate sets of 10 books aimed at Lower Key Stage 1 (ages 5-6), Upper KS1 (ages 6-7) LKS1 (ages 7-8/9) and UKS2 (ages 9-11). All new schools that sign up with Beanstalk receive one starter pack of the 40 books. All volunteers that go through Beanstalk’s selection and training process from now on will have access to a full starter pack of 40 books when they begin in a school.

Thanks to the support of Marilyn Brocklehurst the relevant starter packs required by Beanstalk partner schools will be selected, boxed and distributed by the Norfolk Children’s Book Centre ready for newly-trained volunteers to use once they begin their one-to-one sessions with the children.

What the authors say…

Michael Rosen, author of *The Laugh Out Loud Joke Book*, said: “I can remember with great fondness the way my brother and I used to read out jokes to each other. It's a great way of enjoying what books can offer us. With this in mind I put together a joke book and I'm delighted that Beanstalk have put it in their starter pack. Enjoy!”

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Philip Ardagh, author of *Norman the Norman from Normandy*, said: "Tom Morgan-Jones and I are DELIGHTED that Norman the Norman from Normandy has found his way into the Beanstalk starter packs, aren't we Tom? Tom's nodding as he's busily drawing Norman riding Truffle, the not-so-wild boar. Why are we so pleased. "Because Beanstalk is the best!" I was going to say that, Tom... *Mutters* Anyway, it's a fantastic scheme and we're all-three pleased to be a part of it. All four, if you count Truffle."

Pippa Goodhart, author of *You Choose*, said: “Of all the more than a hundred books I've written, You Choose is the one that I most often seen in crumpled, torn and drawn-on condition. That is wonderful because it reflects a book being used and used and used to bits by children! I was a child who loved listening to stories and playing stories, but I found reading very hard, and 'reading books' scary. In You Choose, the text is incidental to the main task of 'reading' the pictures, and so the pressure of a chunk of text that has to be read is removed. As they make their choices through the book, children become co-creators with the author and illustrator, rather than passive recipients of an already formed story. What they take from the book really is 'theirs', and that makes it both fun and empowering. My hope is that this is a book which helps less sure children make friends with books.”

Nick Sharratt, Illustrator for *You Choose, Wriggle and Roar, Mixed Up Fairy Tales, The Big Book of Magical Mix Ups* said: “As a huge admirer of Beanstalk and the vital work they do in primary schools, I'm truly delighted that not one but four of the books I've illustrated have been selected for inclusion for their starter packs, geared to help set children on the path to confident reading.”

Julia Donaldson, author of *Wriggle and Roar!,* said: "I have great admiration for the work that Beanstalk do and I am delighted that they have selected *Wriggle and Roar* for this brilliant new initiative"

Kes Gray, author of *Oi Frog!,* said: “Oi Beanstalk! Thank you so much for including Oi Frog in your reading scheme! I’ll trust you to get your seating arrangements right.”

Andy Stanton, author of *You’re a Bad Man, Mr. Gum!* Said: “I've been told many times that 'Mr Gum' has helped to get young readers started and it never fails to give me goosebumps - what a privilege it is to write for children. My stories might be silly, but I take writing and reading very seriously and am absolutely delighted to be included in Beanstalk's starter pack.”

Axel Scheffler author of *Flip Flap Jungle*, said: “It’s an honour and pleasure for me to know that Flip Flap Jungle will be introduced to so many children through Beanstalk’s great work in encouraging literacy and the joy of reading.”

Nosy Crow Books said: “We very much admire and value the work that Beanstalk does, so we are delighted that Nosy Crow books have been chosen for inclusion in their starter packs.”

- Ends –

Notes to editors:

The criteria used to choose the books included:

- The various levels a particular child could be reading at based on which age the pack is targeted at.
- Books that could be read and 'played' with in multiple ways.
- Books from across a broad range of genres, (picture books, rhyme, tongue twisters, jokes, poetry, discussion texts, chapter books, wordless, non-fiction).
- Books that engage a variety of children, regardless of interests, age, gender, ethnicity.
- Books that are brilliant to read aloud by both adults and children.
- Books that support a child’s visual literacy.

To view Beanstalk’s ‘Top 40’ books visit the reading resources area of the website: https://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/beanstalk-top-40 - (This link will not be active until 1st May 2018). For a full list of the books please see the attachment to this email. For further information please contact Kate Rumsby kate.rumsby@beanstalkcharity.org.uk 07912 392275, or Sarah Pickstone sarah.pickstone@beanstalkcharity.org.uk, 07815 707701.

About Beanstalk

- Beanstalk is a national charity that provides one-to-one support to children who struggle with their reading.
- The charity recruits, trains and supports volunteers to provide one-to-one reading support in primary schools.

- Beanstalk's trained reading helpers transform the lives of the children they support, turning them into confident, passionate and able readers.
- Reading helpers work with three children that need extra encouragement and support with reading at a local primary school and spend 30 minutes with each child twice a week, during term-time, for at least one academic year.
- In the last school year the charity helped over 11,000 children across England, in over 1,400 schools, with the help of over 3,000 reading helpers, ensuring children have the skills and confidence to reach their true potential.
- By 2020-21 Beanstalk aims to help 30,000 children every year, with 8,000 volunteers.

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